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# THE Baptist Record

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JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION SINCE 1877

## BRIEFS

### FREE SPEECH BATTLE HEATING UP AT MICH.

ANN ARBOR, Mich. (BP) — A new student organization stepping into the college campus free speech fight has sued the University of Michigan over its speech code. In a lawsuit filed May 8, Speech First alleges the University of Michigan's "vaguely worded" speech code protects hearers' sensibilities at the expense of speakers' constitutional right to free speech. The university defends its speech policy and Bias Response Team as necessary tools for promoting civil engagement on campus.

### GUIDESTONE PROPOSES BUDGET HEALTH CARE

DALLAS (BP) — Churches and pastors looking for budget-minded health care coverage as well as protection for their employees and their families have another option to consider coming this summer. GuideStone Financial Resources, the financial services entity of the Southern Baptist Convention, will roll out its new GuideStone Secure Health plan during the June 12-13 SBC annual meeting in Dallas. With enrollment to begin July 1, Ministers and churches can visit GuideStone.org/SecureHealthInfo to sign up to receive emails when available to learn more about the plan.

### ERLC WILL HOST SEXUAL ABUSE PANEL IN DALLAS

DALLAS (BP) — Sexual abuse and assault will be subjects of a panel discussion convened by the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) on the eve of the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention June 12-13 in Dallas. ERLC will sponsor a conversation on some of society's hottest topics during Gospel Sexuality in a #MeToo Culture at 9 p.m. on June 11 in Ballrooms E, F, and G of the Omni Hotel in Dallas. Panelists will discuss how the Gospel of Jesus guides the Christian view of such subjects not only as sexual assault, abuse and harassment but domestic violence, pornography, and infidelity.



**CONCRETE COMING** — Workers for CPS Pools and Spas in Terry rush to secure forms May 16 for concrete aprons around the new, Junior Olympic-size swimming pool at Central Hills Retreat near West. The concrete was poured later that afternoon. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

## Central Hills making big splash

By William H. Perkins Jr.  
Editor

At Central Hills Retreat near West, staffers are hard at work getting everything in place for the summer camping season just around the corner.

"Preparations are speeding up as the date for the first week of summer camp is approaching. Staffing has been completed. Activity sites are being cleaned up. We're stocking supplies," said camp manager Shane Thrash. "We're ready."

Thrash is projecting 2,900 people will attend the 15 different Central Hills camps this summer. "Last year the final count was 2,850 campers. The year before, there were 3,000 campers," he said.

see SPLASH on p. 8

## Evangelism task force completes report

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — With hopes of catalyzing "a fresh wave of evangelistic passion," the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) evangelism task force has finalized its recommendations to the convention and will release them a week before the SBC annual meeting in Dallas next month.

The task force, appointed last June by SBC President Steve Gaines, senior pastor of Bellevue Church in suburban Memphis, held its third and final meeting May 14-15 at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth.

In addition to adopting its recommendations unanimously, the 19-member group elected Southern Seminary administrator Adam Greenway as vice



**WRAPPING UP** — The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) evangelism task force unanimously adopted recommendations for its final report to the 2018 annual meeting in Dallas in a few weeks, during a May 14-15 meeting at Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth. (BP photo)

see EVANGELISM on p. 8

## Regulation could bar fed funding of abortion

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — The Trump administration's U.S. Department of Health and Human Services proposed a regulation May 18 that would bar Planned Parenthood and other organizations that perform or refer for abortions from receiving federal money through the Title X family planning program, according to news reports.

The Protect Life Rule, as it is being labeled, would be a step toward a longtime goal of the pro-life movement: the public defunding of the country's No. 1 abortion provider. Planned Parenthood reportedly receives \$50-\$60 million yearly in Title X money amid \$543.7 million collected in government grants and reimbursements while performing more than 321,000 abortions in the most recent year for which statistics are available.

Russell Moore, president of Southern Baptists' Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, welcomed the administration's intent to offer a rule "clearly stating that family planning does not include abortion."

"This is a critical point to make because the facts are clear: without abortion, there

see REGULATION on p. 8

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## From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

### Holy ground or meeting hall?

As the people of other, non-Christian faiths continue their steady flow into Mississippi, how progressively accommodating are we Christians toward the followers of other religions? Are we at all concerned for their eternal fate, or do we want to simply live and let live?

An article a few years back by Lauren Green on FoxNews.com revealed that at least two United Methodist churches — one of which is located just a few miles from the Mississippi border — at the time were allowing Muslims to use their church facilities for prayers to Allah and other religious activities.

HeartSong Church in Cordova, Tn., just outside Memphis, welcomed members of the Memphis Islamic Center to hold Ramadan observances in their facilities, and Aldersgate Methodist Church in Alexandria, Va., permitted the Islamic Circle of North America to hold regular Friday prayers while their new mosque was being built nearby.

HeartSong's senior pastor, Steve Stone, told Christianity Today magazine subscribers that, "No thought was given to the political ramifications. The decision was firmly based on our understanding of the mission and nature of the church."

Stone is not related to the Steve Stone who serves the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board as associate executive director for church growth.

Jason Micheli, Aldersgate's pastor, echoed the HeartSong pastor's sentiments. He was quoted in a separate Christianity Today article by Jason B. Hood: "When we say that Jesus is the only way to the Father, we don't just mean our belief in Jesus is the only way to the Father. We also mean Jesus' way of life is the only way we manifest the Father's love. That we would welcome Muslim strangers into our sacred space with no strings attached is not a reduction of what we believe about Jesus (or a betrayal);

it is, I think, the fullest possible expression of what we believe about Jesus."

Not so fast, said Mike Huckabee, a FoxNews television host at the time and also the former governor of Arkansas who holds degrees from Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ar., and Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth.

"Is there a reason to say that the people who donated, who gave, who sacrificed to give that facility really ever intended it to be a place where something that is the antithesis of the Gospel of Christ would be presented?" he asked during one of his Fox broadcasts.

"If the purpose of a church is to push forth the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and then you have a Muslim group that says Jesus Christ and all the people that follow Him are a bunch of infidels who should be essentially obliterated, I guess I have a hard time understanding that," said the former Southern Baptist pastor and presidential candidate.

Absent from any of the articles that reported these events was whether a Christian witness was presented to the Muslim visitors. That's every believer's responsibility, of course, but it can be assumed from the respectful tone of the two church pastors that such was not the case. Micheli's comments indicate the Muslim worshippers were welcomed with "no strings attached."

There is such a thing as holy ground. Whatever form our outreach takes toward Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Rastafarians, Zoroastrians, or any other group, let us never forget that our overarching goal is not to provide them with a meeting hall but rather to help them find their way to Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God who was sent to save the world. No compromising, no minimizing. It is the rock on which our faith endures forever. (Matthew 28:18-20). It is our mission in life.

Else we have failed our Lord and Savior. God forbid that should ever happen with Mississippi Baptists.

## Playing for Keeps

My first dealings with gambling came in the fourth grade while playing marbles with other fellows who were advanced in years and quite obviously advanced in the art of shooting marbles.

Our teacher, Mrs. Bowlin, had gotten wind of this misbehavior and decided to draw a large circle — kinda looked like a marble ring — on the blackboard, asking us boys to pledge to play for fun and not for keeps.

Mrs. Bowlin gave us our first lecture on the ills of playing marbles for keeps. She said things like, "It's not right to get marbles from another fellow without giving him something in return." She spoke about loving the other fellow and not taking advantage of his inability to play well. You know, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matthew 7:12).

I remember how it hurt me to lose two cat-eyed beauties, and it hurt me when I won an old chipped marble someone had placed in the ring. I thought about returning it to the lawful owner, but he was going to throw it away anyway. We were just young boys learning lessons that would stay with us for a lifetime, so I signed my name in the circle. I never played for keeps again.

Now we learn that in our beloved state we will soon have legal sports betting. Can you imagine the great temptation placed on young college athletes to accidentally, on purpose, drop a pass or miss a free shot just because someone they know has a wager on the game or has bet on the game being close as opposed to a "runaway" victory?

We were little boys with marbles in our pockets, but now young hopefuls can be tempted to be unfair because a youngster in their family does, in fact, need a new pair of shoes.

Years ago, I pastored in the Mississippi Delta where great temptation to gamble has always seemed to flow like the mighty Mississippi. I have counseled with those who have lost more than any human being should lose. I have looked into the eyes of the loser who must now face his family with tragic news.



### Guest opinion with Dan Robertson

Do not play for keeps!

Sports betting is playing for keeps rather than playing for fun. It has always been around, but to make such behavior legal in our beloved state is, to me, unconscionable. Our gifted young people need to be encouraged, but not to become pawns on which to bet. Already our state has the dubious distinction of casino gambling. We are having discussions to bring a state-run lottery here, and we are now rushing toward sports betting at break-neck speed.

I want to know: Where did we lose esteeming the other person greater than ourselves, loving the other person with Christ's kind of love, working hard for what we have, being honest in our dealings with anyone we meet, and looking to God's providential care to sustain us, rather than gambling?

I agree with retired U.S. Senator Bill Bradley, the former National Basketball Association star, when he said recently that the U.S. Supreme Court ruling allowing gambling will poison sports and the values it teaches (northjersey.com). I love to cheer for my favorite team, not for a point spread!

I love those Bulldogs, Rebels, and Golden Eagles. I pray for all athletes as they play for the love of the game. I cannot imagine placing such a stumbling block in front of our hometown favorites. Sports betting should never be sanctioned by God-fearing Mississippians. Sometimes, I think we are about to lose our marbles!

Robertson, chair of the Christian Action Commission of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, is the transitional pastor at Friendship Church, Sturgis.

## THE BaptistRecord

**Editor**  
William H. Perkins Jr.  
wperkins@mbcb.org

**Associate Editor**  
Tony Martin  
tmartin@mbcb.org

**Layout/Design**  
Megan Young  
myoung@mbcb.org

**Advertising**  
Dana Richardson  
drichardson@mbcb.org

**Circulation Manager**  
DeAnna Burgess  
dburgess@mbcb.org

**Baptist Record Advisory Committee:**  
Whit Lewis, New Albany  
Derrick Wilson, Kosciusko  
Carolyn Reeves, Oxford  
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Lucy Stringer, Foxworth  
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**Postmaster:**  
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**Tel:** (601) 968-3800  
**Fax:** (601) 292-3330  
**E-mail:** baptistrecord@mbcb.org

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# Baptist leaders speak out on domestic violence

**NASHVILLE (BP and local reports)** — As discussion of domestic violence persists among evangelicals, seasoned pastors and others who minister to families are advising their ministry colleagues on what to do when they encounter physical abuse in a marriage.

"When we have a case of domestic violence, my recommendation is that we immediately deal with making safety the number one priority for the spouse that's being abused physically," said South Carolina pastor Marshall Blalock, whose state was called by Charleston's Post and Courier "among the deadliest states in the union for women" in terms of domestic violence.

"In some cases," creating a safe environment "may mean law enforcement is involved," Blalock, pastor of First Church in Charleston and president of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, told Baptist Press (BP).

"...We've learned in South Carolina domestic violence oftentimes leads to very serious cases, even people being killed. So you never want to put yourself in a situation where you underestimate the gravity of domestic violence," he said.

Blalock, a 30-year pastoral ministry veteran, said his state's laws require reporting domestic abuse any time it involves a child. He recommends reporting abuse of a spouse any time children are present in the house.



BLALOCK

## Studies give insight

Two studies by LifeWay Research, one in 2017 and another in 2014, have highlighted pastors' views on domestic violence.

Last year's study found 89% of American Protestant pastors believe their churches regularly communicate that domestic violence is not acceptable. Still, 45% say their churches have no specific plan to help victims of abuse.

The 2014 study found 62% of pastors have provided "couples or marriage counseling" to those experiencing domestic violence, and 56% address the subject in messages at least annually.

Joanna Berry, vice president of family and international ministries for South Texas Children's Home Ministries (STCHM), a ministry partner of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, told BP that



BERRY

pastors should address domestic violence from the pulpit and prepare to point abuse victims to resources.

"From the pulpit a pastor can present how women should be treated, using many examples, including Jesus," Berry said in written comments. "Testimonies from recovering women are extremely impactful. The church can also provide counseling services, a confidential phone line [and] list resources on their website."

"Resources should include where a mother with children could go for respite and healing, keeping in mind that most women will not have financial resources to pay for this."

STCHM and some other Baptist children's homes — ministries affiliated with more than 20 Baptist state conventions — offer abused women "a safe environment, counseling, spiritual, and practical training to rebuild their lives and... skills to help with a variety of issues, including job skills all at no cost," Berry said.

LifeWay Research, the polling and research arm of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, found that among churches with resources for domestic violence victims, 76% have a referral list for professional counselors, 64% have finances to assist victims and 61% can find victims a safe place to stay. Fifty-three percent have a referral list for legal help.

## Church's character

Tony Rose, a 31-year veteran of the pastorate with a master's degree in conflict management in addition to his theological training, noted "the pain and effort and energy and angst it causes a pastor who's willing to step into the messes of people's lives and walk with them."

He said the effort is worth helping hurting people.

"We do not need to hide" domestic abuse, Rose, pastor of LaGrange (Ky.) Church, told BP. "We don't need to fear making [abuse] public. The church doesn't have a reputation to guard. She has a character to guard. Reputation is what people think of you. Character is what you really are."

After a report of abuse is confirmed, "the first thing" a pastor should do "is get the couple to separate for safety's sake," Rose said, adding separation is not the same as divorce.

During the separation, both the husband and wife should get counseling ei-



ROSE



Photo by Lolostock/Shutterstock.com

ther from their pastor or a Christian provider the church recommends, said Rose, who chaired the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee's Mental Health Advisory Council.

The goal of counseling a couple dealing with domestic abuse is to preserve the marriage, Rose said. Yet he believes in severe cases there is "freedom of conscience to grant divorce and remarriage" for "something as far out and against Christian truth and the covenant of marriage as abuse."

## To divorce, or not?

Like Rose, Blalock said he believes divorce is justifiable in some cases of abuse, though some godly pastors disagree. He called physical abuse "a serious violation of the marriage covenant."

Alan Branch, an ethics professor at Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City, Kan., noted the variety of views among evangelicals about abuse and divorce, but he said a wife is never "required to stay in a situation where she is in physical danger."

"There is no specific passage of Scripture which addresses divorce and domestic violence," Branch told BP in written comments. "There are two issues: What is one's stance on divorce and what is one's stance regarding domestic violence. There are a wide variety of moral stances regarding divorce

among Southern Baptists.

"In 1 Corinthians 7:15," Branch said, "Paul says that if a non-believer chooses to leave a believing spouse, the believer is no longer bound [to the marriage]. The situation Paul has in mind seems to be case where two non-Christians get married, and then one of them comes to faith in Christ after they are married. If the non-believer decides he or she doesn't want to be married to a Christian, many Baptists understand Paul to be giving an allowance for divorce."

"For some, physical abuse is considered a kind of 'abandonment' and thus an allowance for divorce in cases of physical abuse."

Other Southern Baptists, Branch said, "do not see any allowance for divorce in the Bible. For people with such a moral stance, the idea of a permanent separation is often suggested" in cases of physical abuse.

Regardless of their views on divorce, Blalock said, pastors should always get abuse victims to a safe place and never "make people feel like if you're a good Christian, you shouldn't say anything about" domestic violence. Silence "is not helping our families."

The SBC last spoke to domestic violence in a 1979 resolution which recognized it "as one of the serious moral issues of our time," encouraged pastors and churches to minister to domestic violence victims, and urged "clear and responsible public policy related to domestic violence" at the local, state, and national levels.



BRANCH

# Ohio bill clarifies parental rights in transgender clashes

**CINCINNATI, Ohio (BP)** — State legislators in Ohio last week introduced a bill that would protect parents who do not want their children to undergo treatment for gender dysphoria.

The bill, sponsored by Republican state Reps. Tom Brinkman and Paul Zeltwanger, affirms the fundamental right of parents to "withhold consent for gender dysphoria treatment or activities that are designed and intended to form a child's

conception of sex and gender."

The measure would also require schools to inform parents in writing if their child exhibits symptoms of gender dysphoria or demonstrates a desire to identify as a different gender.

Before a school or other government agency could provide any treatment — including medical, psychological, or social therapy — the bill would require they inform the child's parents about the possible risks

of such treatment and receive written consent.

The legislation responds to a case earlier this year in which an Ohio judge permanently removed a teenage girl from her parents' custody because they did not want her to undergo sex-change treatment.

Cincinnati-area Juvenile Court Judge Sylvia Hendon turned the 17-year-old over to her grandparents, who supported her desire to identify

as a boy. The teen's parents instead wanted to pursue Christian counseling to help identify the underlying causes of the gender dysphoria.

A hospital gender clinic told the judge it was a matter of life or death for the girl to receive hormone therapy to alter her gender identity.

"It's absolutely horrifying that the state would remove a child from parents' custody to put the child on untested and

dangerous drugs," Aaron Baer, president of Citizens for Community Values said in a statement. "Hamilton County Job and Family Services crossed the line in this case. HB 658 ensures this can't happen to other Ohio families."

Critics of hormone therapy for children argue it is a social and medical experiment with the potential to cause long-term harm including sterilization.

**M**onday, May 28, is an official holiday in America that we call Memorial Day. For the most part people across our land will celebrate the day with family and friends and food and fireworks and all of the things that have come to be a festival of kicking off the summer and vacation time — but it is Memorial Day, a day when we remember all of those who have given their service and so many who ultimately gave their lives for us to have freedom. It is hard for us to comprehend all of the people who made it possible for us to enjoy the blessings that we enjoy in America.

It's a somber thought that gets lost in the blessings of the memorial festivities. Would you pause for a moment and just give some consideration to the Unknowns? Two categories of Unknowns I would like to address. One is the unknown soldiers who died in almost every war or skirmish we have fought. Very few things have I ever sat silently and watched and experienced that are more moving than the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington Cemetery in Washington D.C. It is guarded day and night, 365 days a year. It represents all of the unknown soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen who gave their lives and when found were unidentifiable and unknown.

War is a terrible thing, and it does terrible things to fallen warriors to the point that they may not be able to be recognized, identified, and forever will remain unknown. Some years ago, I was preaching in one of our Mississippi towns that had a large area in their cemetery filled with soldiers who had been killed in war. I went over and visited that part of the cemetery and walked from grave to grave, marker to marker, that was only identified with Unknown, Unknown, Unknown. I left there thinking about all of those people and they weighed heavy on my heart. I didn't live when they were alive, and they are only represented by a marker that says Unknown.

Early one morning I walked back to the cemetery and went to that whole section and stood there before the marker Unknown and paused long enough to meditate or pray or try to think about who that person was and remember because whoever it was paid the ultimate sacrifice for all those who pass by



With Jim Foral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

## Remembering the Unknowns

to see the markers. One by one, I took the time, not sure how long it was, and stood there and wondered where they came from, who they had left behind when they went to war, and did they know Jesus.

One by one without rushing past any one, I stood there and felt the enormity of the loss that was represented in that one small section of the cemetery of people who had given the ultimate sacrifice for my freedom and were unknown. Just a mental exercise of hearing about me doing that reminds me of the weight of concern and grief and appreciation that I felt simply by walking there, stopping, thinking, and moving to the next one. I am certainly aware of the fact that because I didn't know them and had no idea what their circumstances were and knew nothing about their family, in an ongoing kind of consideration I thought about all of them, the Unknowns who laid down their lives for us.

The second thing that I would like for you to think about is the Unknowns who remain. When someone is killed in action, there is immense grief in a family, maybe in a church, in a community, in a state because of the loss that we all feel — but those who were the closest to that warrior are the ones who go on carrying the burden while the rest of us within days or weeks are back to life's daily grind. They become those who remain alive and well, some of the Unknowns. There have been times when around

Memorial Day I'm so mindful of many of those people who may be sitting out there about whom I don't know what they've been feeling all these years. I may not have ever met them, but they are carrying that load. They may be someone who is a dear friend of mine. They never talk about what continues to come to their mind and heart and they ponder it daily. They are the Unknowns. I know you can't go to every one of them on Memorial Day and say thank you for what your son or daughter did in blessing our nation. If you know them, try to find an appropriate way to bless them. If you don't know them, thank God for the Unknowns that carry a burden that you most likely don't carry. So often and to so many around them, the whole event fades in their memory and they become Unknowns.

Several years ago, I was at a graveside service of a friend who had died. When we arrived at the cemetery the funeral director came to me, aside from the rest of the people, and asked if I saw the couple standing about a hundred yards from where we were. He said they wanted to know if I would talk to them after the graveside service. I told him I would and asked who they were. He said he didn't know them. I said, "I can't tell from here if I know them or not." He said, "Well, they know you and they would like to talk to you." I said, "As soon as I get finished here, I'll go talk to them."

After we had the graveside service and people were leaving, I left to walk across

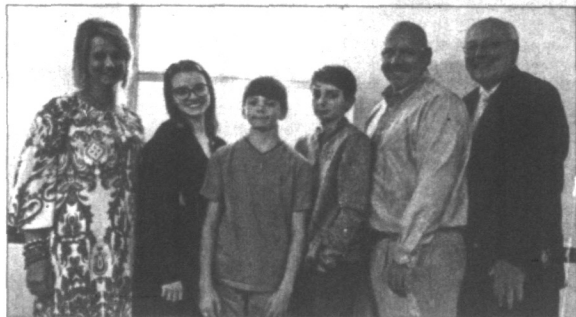
the cemetery and there was this precious older couple who I immediately recognized when I got to them. I also recognized the place where we were standing is where decades before I had conducted the funeral and burial of their son who had been killed in action. The reason they wanted to talk with me is because it was there that they had the last contact with the remains of their son. There he was buried. I remembered them so well. I remembered their son's death and hearing about him being killed in action. I remember the funeral. I remember being there with them at that place. While I remembered all that, I am confident there had never been a day, maybe not an hour, that they had not thought about the loss that they experienced. I suppose you could multiply that millions of times in the hearts and minds of a dad and mom, sister or brother, friend, pastor, schoolmate, and on and on the memories continue of the loss experienced. In some ways, they just become a part of the Unknowns out there.

Truth is that as we remember Memorial Day and remember the Unknowns, both those who have been lost and those who lost someone, there have been huge numbers in our national family. For instance, when you think just about the first war when we were fighting for our independence, while just over 50 men signed the Declaration of Independence, 25,324 soldiers died to seal the document. Then in the war supposedly to end all wars there were over 400,000 soldiers who died from America alone while soldiers from other countries raised the number who died into the multiple millions. War is a terrible thing.

Remembering those who were willing to fight for us is a worthy thing so today, pause and thank God for the soldiers, sailors, Marines, and all veterans, the people who live and work among us. Where you can, in ways that will be thoughtful, thank them for their service. While you may not know any of the Unknowns, you can pause at least to think about the hundreds of thousands who are only remembered as Unknown but are known to God. May God bless you in this day off on Monday, but think about those who gave it all for us.

The author can be contacted at [directions@mcb.org](mailto:directions@mcb.org).

## Staff Changes



**SHELTON CHURCH, MOSELLE**, held a pastor installation service May 6 to welcome Ken Tew as their new pastor. Shown are Kristin, Elizabeth, Joshua, Corban, and Tew with Allan Nix, AMD.

### In other Staff Change News:

► **Union County Association, New Albany**, is hosting a retirement reception for Charles Rogers, May 27, 2 – 4 p.m., at the associational office.

## Revivals & Homecomings

► **Arlington Church, Bogus Chitto: Homecoming**, May 27; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; special music, 10:30 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by noon meal; Cletus Moak, speaker; Doug Moak, music.

► **Franklin County Association: Starlight crusade**, Franklin County High School football field, May 30 – June 2, 7 p.m. nightly; Matt Buckles and Jonathan Sherwin, crusade leaders.

► **Friendship Church, Brookhaven: Homecoming**, May 27; worship, 11 a.m., followed by dinner on the ground, business meeting, and afternoon service; offering received for the building fund or cemetery; Carroll Walker, speaker.

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MCJ RUUW AKT HZGGMCJGUCLT.

VKYTL QZAC VKIU:LPZ

Clue: B = G

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: 1 Peter 2:20

By Charles Marx, 1932–2004, © 2005



# Chaplains an integral cog in military's machinery

**FORT BENNING, Ga. (BP)** — When Chaplain (CPT) Robert Boyles was in U.S. Army Ranger School training at Ft. Benning, Ga., he met four strangers he would eventually baptize. However, when the weather turned 15 degrees that night, Boyles was simply another Ranger in training, stomping his feet in his Army boots to keep warm.

Boyles and the others were in the Mountain phase of an arduous 61 days in training at Fort Benning's Ranger Brigade. They'd already endured a 12-mile road march carrying 35-pound rucksacks and weapons. There were intense military instruction, challenging patrols, and a grueling physical training (PT) test together.

During their cold circuit in the mountains, Boyles and a few of the other men talked.

Unbeknownst to many soldiers, Boyles was a chaplain in training — sliding on his belly in the mud, just like the others, under a fence of barbed wire and running toward whirring helicopters in the middle of the night.

Boyles would be there at the end, earning his Ranger tab and graduating with the elite.

Why? Because chaplaincy is all about being present. "Chaplains pay their dues," says Chaplain (Major) Philip Kramer, senior chaplain in the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigades at Fort Benning.

The cloth [chaplains] wear is the same cloth our fellow soldiers wear. It is earned with blood, sweat, and tears, and paid in the form of hard work for the purpose of ministering.

It's why Chaplain (CPT) Robert Davis, an Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade

chaplain, continuously jumps with young airborne trainees off 250-foot towers formerly built for the 1939 New York World's Fair.

"We want to be constantly available to our constituents, which means doing what they are doing in order to earn the respect to reach them," Davis says.

Currently, 37 chaplains and 38 religious affairs specialists are serving the religious and pastoral needs of thousands of soldiers, families, and authorized civilian personnel at the military base. They are the Fort Benning Unit Ministry Team under the watchful eye of Chaplain (COL) Robert Hart, a Southern Baptist who heads the Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE)/Garrison Chaplain, Religious Support Office.

The office is in charge of 25 weekend services and 40 weekday programs in 15 facilities. "In the Army, many soldiers have spiritual experiences," Boyles says. "Knowing a chaplain means knowing someone they can talk to."

In sleeting weather during Ranger training, for example, Boyles' presence and proximity to his troops allowed him to reach them on another level and even pray with them upon request. After graduating, Boyles remains a chaplain at the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade.

Boyles' support comes from the MCoE in its role of providing safety, support, and services to all military and civilian organizations as well as comprehensive religious support. It is also a trusted advisory team to the commander and staff on matters pertaining to religious support, morals, pastoral care, and morale issues.

Chaplain (COL) Bob Hart's philosophy entails three steps: People first, professional care, and be purpose-driven.

"People first" is about being with soldiers when they train, deploy, and have problems they need someone to hear. Chaplains putting people first are compassionate and provide kind and understanding leadership to those far from home.



**COMING ALONGSIDE** — U.S. Army chaplains not only complete all rigorous Army training with men and women in uniform but also offer spiritual counsel to Army members by putting people first, providing professional care, and focusing on the fruit that comes from sharing the Gospel. (BP photo courtesy of NAMB)

■ "Professional care" is about providing confidentiality to those in the Army. This requires integrity and respect from the chaplains.

■ "Purpose-driven" is about focusing on the Great Commission and about being fruitful.

"There's a lot of additional things easy to get wrapped up in, like status," Kramer says, "but those things produce foliage, not fruit. We have to focus as chaplains on the fruit and on producing that fruit as part of the Great Commission."

"It's a challenge, but we must have a greater commitment to what truly matters in life and live out that commitment."

Going on 28 years of service, Shane Chapman, the 194th Brigade Command Sergeant Major (CSM), meets basic trainees at the starting lines of their military careers.

"I saw the worst of what humans can do to each other," Chapman says about his first deployment at age 20 to Somalia. "I tell the basic trainees that glory and war do not go together. We are patriots and we fight for our country because we believe in it, not

because we want the glory."

"If that's what they're fighting for, they won't find it in a war zone."

During the course of eight deployments, Chapman realized many find God on deployment.

"We have about 60,000 soldiers a year pass through Fort Benning," he says. "My goal is to produce aspiring professionals to the force by developing disciplined, competent, professional, well-trained soldiers who are accountable for their actions."

"It's hard work but I care because I love the troops and I know our chaplains do too."

The chaplaincy is there for soldiers when their "innocent view of the world is lost," Chapman says.

"We must rely on something greater than ourselves to get through it," says Chaplain Jay Burke, currently serving the 2-58th infantry regiment at Fort Benning. "We can't lose the sacredness of life. We are here to remind them there is a reason and purpose."

"Our commitments to the soldiers are not only about honoring the nation but also about connecting dots of moral absolutes not determined by man."

"It's tough but, as chaplains, we get on our knees and pray and then live with the soldiers. We search for leaders among them to train up. We give our best and encourage personal relationships with Christ beyond theory and tradition."

"We all need Jesus. Chaplains are here to remind everyone amidst the noise of what is important."

## 75 FOUNDATION FLASHBACK

Highlights from the history of your Mississippi Baptist Foundation shared in the format of their original publication in *The Baptist Record*.

The following writeup was published on May 7, 1971.

### "Edwina Robinson Trust Fund" Is Set Up In Foundation

An "Edwina Robinson Trust Fund" has been set up with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation, according to announcement by Rev. Carey E. Cox, executive secretary of the Foundation.

The "Trust" was set up from funds transferred to the Foundation by Dr. Edwina Robinson, who on May 1 is retiring from the position of executive secretary of the Woman's Missionary Union of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, after 27 years of service in that position and a total of 37 years service in the department.

Most of the money placed in the new trust came from a gift of \$9,030.00 which was presented to Dr. Robinson at the recent state WMU Convention in Jackson. This gift came from friends all across the state.

Special emphasis is given to the Mississippi WMU Edwina Robinson Offering during the month of May.

Two of the featured allocations for the 2018 offering are the Macedonian Call Foundation and assistance for aged ministers and widows. The Macedonian Call Foundation helps provide international missionaries with vehicles for their use while traveling Stateside. Assistance for aged ministers and widows provides tangible support for those whose lives have been devoted first to Kingdom service.

>>>> Visit [msbaptistfoundation.org](http://msbaptistfoundation.org), call 601-292-3210, or e-mail [foundation@mbcb.org](mailto:foundation@mbcb.org) to learn how the Mississippi Baptist Foundation can serve you, your family, and your church.

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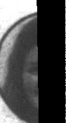
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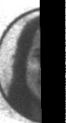
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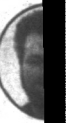
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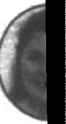
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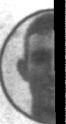
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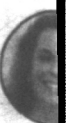
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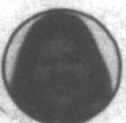
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## SPLASH

cont. from p. 1

While Central Hills Retreat is abuzz with action in every direction, the talk of the camp is the new, zero-entry, Junior Olympic-size pool being installed at the top of the hill that rises through the center of the Baptist-owned facility. The original pool, built when the camp opened in 1979, had increasingly been showing its age under the pressure of near-capacity crowds each week all summer long. The decision was made to replace it before it became unsafe.

CPS Pools and Spas in Terry is the contractor for the new Central Hills pool — the same company that built the new pool in 2015 at Baptist-owned Garaywa Camp and Conference Center in Clinton.

Thrash said he's praying pool construction will be finished by Memorial Day, a short time after which Central Hills will be filled with enthusiastic participants at Camp Ruby, a week-long excursion for persons with special needs.

After that, more young people from Mississippi Baptists churches will be ready to dive in to what will undoubtedly serve as one of the camp's most popular attractions.

Thrash predicted the pool will be ready for use by the time Camp Ruby cranks up.

Thrash noted a special feature in the pool area is the 20'x30' splash pad, which is connected to the new pool at a right angle. The splash pad will contain a collection of spray nozzles mounted flush with the surface of the pad that will shoot computer-controlled, vertical streams of water several feet high.



**SHAKY CHALLENGE** — Central Hills Retreat staffer Rachel Jones of Kosciusko watches closely as a second-grader works to complete a confidence-building exercise on the Ropes Course at Central Hills Retreat near West. The student was part of a field trip group from a local school spending the day at the Mississippi Baptist encampment. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

The new pool won't be the only activity to occupy campers from dawn to well into the evening. Thrash hastened to point out. There's also archery, canoeing on the lake — three kayaks have been added this year — horseback riding, gymnasium events, the Ropes course, miniature golf, crafts, rifle range, and tether ball.

All of that is in addition to the spiritual side of camp attendance at Central Hills, which Thrash emphasized is a focal activity for the young campers. Camp pastors will guide Bible studies and conduct worship services, Thrash said, while 39 staff counselors will be on hand to manage the many activities in which campers can participate and also discuss important spiritual matters with the young people.

Thrash also wanted to emphasize that most of Central Hills' camp schedule is now coeducational. "Central Hills started out as the state's Royal Ambassadors campground and there is one RA week still on the schedule, but many of our camps are now coed. The boys and girls are mostly engaged in separate activities during their time here, except for worship services and meal times."

Most of the 2018 summer camps at Central Hills are nearing capacity, Thrash said, but there is still room for a few more people in almost all of the camps. For more information, contact Cindy Bingham at (662) 289-9730. E-mail: cbingham@mbcb.org. Web site: tinyurl.com/centralhills.

## REGULATION

cont. from p. 1

would be no Planned Parenthood," said Moore in a written statement. "Planned Parenthood is not a 'health care' organization but a storefront for an industry that devalues human life and exploits families and communities."

Pro-life leader U.S. Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.), said the rule "creates a bright line of separation between abortion and family planning."

"The Protect Life Rule is about choice," Smith said in a written release. "Planned Parenthood can stop performing abortions or stop receiving family planning funding. It's time our hard-earned tax dollars go to actually helping women, not enabling the taking of innocent life."

March for Life President Jeanne Mancini predicted in a release the "pro-life grassroots will be pleased to see President Trump deliver on yet another pro-life promise, and we look forward to continued progress in restoring a culture of life here in the United States."

Planned Parenthood and its allies decried the news.

"Everyone has the right to access information about their health care — including information about safe, legal abortion — and every woman de-

serves the best medical care and information, no matter how much money she makes or where she lives," Dawn Laguens, executive vice president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America, said in a written statement.

"They won't get it under this rule," Laguens alleged. "Planned Parenthood will not stop fighting for our patients."

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., said on Twitter, "This is an attack on Planned Parenthood. It's an attack on choice. It's an attack on women's rights."

Messengers to the 2017 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution calling for defunding of Planned Parenthood at all levels of government and denouncing the organization's "immoral agenda and practices."

Planned Parenthood came into existence when eugenicist Margaret Sanger, also a virulent racist, opened a Brooklyn birth control clinic in 1916. She advocated controlling the population of the African American race in the U.S. through abortion.

Planned Parenthood took the lead in the abortion business in this country when a New York affiliate began performing the procedures in 1970. New York legalized abortion that year, three years before the U.S. Supreme Court struck down all state bans on the procedure.

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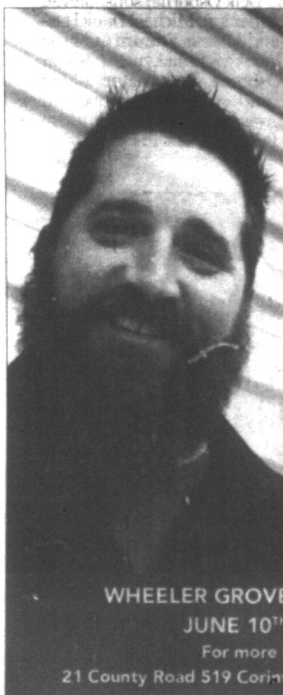
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**Dave Glander was formerly a devout Atheist prior to experiencing a radical encounter with Jesus Christ.**

He is a copastor at The WAY in Hoschton, GA and the founder of Truth Ministries,

an apologetics-based ministry headquartered in Atlanta, GA. He is the owner and curator for the Museum of Truth, which is an 1800 square foot traveling Biblical Museum. Dave is also an expert on the Shroud of Turin and travels with one of only five life-sized Shroud of Turin displays in the world.

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## EVANGELISM

cont. from p. 1

chairman. Southwestern Seminary President Paige Patterson is chairman.

"We finalized several affirmations and denials regarding biblical evangelism that we believe will be readily embraced and adopted by the messengers of the SBC at our upcoming meeting in Dallas," Gaines told Baptist Press (BP) in written comments.

"We also set forth several recommendations that relate to Southern Baptists on multiple levels. We believe these will strengthen and enhance our evangelistic efforts as we move forward to reach our world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ," Gaines wrote.

Greenway, dean of Southern Seminary's Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism, and Ministry in Louisville, Ky., said the meeting was characterized by "constructive conversations about our report and recommendations."

"The evangelization of the world remains our top priority as a convention of churches, and the prayer of all of us serving on this task force is that God will use our efforts to help bring us together by renewing our pas-

sion for and increasing our effectiveness in bringing people to Christ," Greenway told BP in written comments.

Task force member Doug Munton, pastor of First Church in O'Fallon, Ill., said he is "encouraged by the brothers on the evangelism task force. They love the Lord, the SBC, and the Gospel. It is my prayer that we see renewed passion for evangelism and the work of the Great Commission."

The task force "has worked hard and prayed hard," Munton told BP in written comments. "We know that we need a fresh wave of evangelistic passion, but we also need the presence and power of God. We won't get it all right, being imperfect members of an imperfect convention in an imperfect world."

"We do pray we bring encouragement to the SBC to refocus our attention and energy on reaching the lost with the Gospel."

The task force is scheduled to report to the annual morning on the morning of June 13.

Gaines thanked Southern Baptists for their prayers on behalf of the task force and requested continued prayer "for the SBC as we renew our commitment to take the Gospel to all people everywhere."

# Gaines touts ethnic diversity of recent SBC appointments

DALLAS (BP) — Ahead of the

annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in Dallas in a few weeks, SBC President Steve Gaines has released information on the ethnic diversity of this appointments to important convention positions.

The Committee on Committees and the Tellers Committee each include 16% non-Anglo members. The Credentials Committee includes a lower percentage of non-Anglos (four percent) because Gaines tapped for the other three groups most of the non-Anglos who were recommended to him and willing to serve, he said.

"From the beginning, including a maximum percentage of ethnic diversity on the various committees we have appointed has been a major priority and goal in the nominations made under my leadership," Gaines

said in a statement, which was released to Baptist Press.

Of the Resolutions Committee's 10 members, four are African American, four Anglo, one is Hispanic, and one is Asian. Two members are female. The committee is tasked by SBC Bylaw 20 with preparing and submitting resolutions presented to the convention and recommending them for adoption.

"I am grateful for the ethnic diversity we have on the Resolutions Committee," Gaines said. "It is predominantly non-Anglo and is probably one of the most ethnically diverse committees in the history of the SBC."

Of the Committee on Committees' 68 members, 11 are non-Anglo. Six members are female. According to SBC Bylaw 15, the Committee on Committees nominates to the convention the Committee on Nominations, which in turn nominates the members of boards, commissions, and committees.

To appoint the Committee on Committees, Gaines said,

"We received recommendations from across the convention, nominations sent to us by state convention executives, and also those sent to us by key church leaders across the SBC. When we compiled all of those recommendations, we received approximately 200 names, 25% of which were non-Anglos."

"We had 68 openings to fill. Many that we asked declined because they did not plan to attend the convention meeting. Many others who plan to attend the convention meeting simply did not want to serve. That resulted in reducing our original percentage of 25% non-Anglos to the current percentage of 16.2% on the Committee on Committees."

The percentage of non-Anglos serving as tellers and on the Credentials Committee is lower than Gaines had hoped, he said, "because we used most of our recommendations of non-Anglo messengers on the Resolutions Committee and on the Committee on Committees."



GAINES

## Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. **Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.** Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

## OBITUARY

Joseph Mitchell "Mitch" Osborne, 83, long time Mississippi Baptist pastor, passed away May 17 at Pine Crest Guest Home in Hazlehurst, after battles with Alzheimer's Disease, Parkinson's Disease, and pancreatic cancer. He was born in Udall, Kan., on August 10, 1934, the last of three children to Ernest Edward Osborne and Goldia Edna Fleming Osborne. He was a graduate of Sweetwater High School and San Diego Junior College, both in San Diego, Ca. Osborne felt the call to Gospel ministry while in junior college and attended California Baptist College in Riverside. After pastoring a mission at the naval base in San Diego, he received a master of divinity degree from Golden Gate Seminary (now Gateway Seminary in Ontario, Ca.). Osborne then pastored churches in Barstow and Fresno,



OSBORNE

Ca., before moving to Mississippi where he pastored Sand Hill Church, Ellisville; Oakland Grove Church, Laurel; Trinity First Church, Waynesboro; Pope Church, Pope; New Salem Church, McCall Creek; and Pine Level Church, Leakesville. He also ministered at numerous nursing homes and was a chaplain at South Mississippi Correctional Institution, Leakesville. Osborne was preceded in death by his parents; brother, William Edward Osborne; and sister, Dollie Osborne Davis. He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Martha Delk Osborne; sons, Steven Edward Wright (Juanita), Michael Daniel Osborne (Debra), and Marcus Edward Osborne (Leanne); daughters, Victoria Lynette Wright and Michelle Osborne Whittington (Joe); eight grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren. Funeral service was held May 20 at Sunrise Church, Petal. Moore Funeral Home in Hattiesburg was in charge of arrangements.

## Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

# THE VILLAGE VIEW



Sean A. Milner, Executive Director  
P.O. Box 27  
Clinton, MS 39060-0027  
(601) 922-2242  
www.baptistchildrensvillage.com

## GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

### MARCH

#### MEMORIALS

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Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Wilkinson  
Ronnie Puckett  
Mr. & Mrs. Reece Douglas, Jr.  
Mary Putman  
Mr. & Mrs. Byron Kvie  
Mrs. Irene Addison Rumbley  
Mrs. Edna M. Gilliland  
Mr. & Mrs. Charles W. Renfrow  
Mr. James E. Riehsing  
Faithful Workers SSC, Salem BC  
Ms. Betty Faye Sansing  
Mr. & Mrs. Hank Robison  
Mrs. Alice Sherrard  
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Jimmy Shoemaker  
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Mr. Lester Smith  
Mr. & Mrs. Terry E. Champion  
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New Sight BC  
Mr. Richard Southern  
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Mr. & Mrs. Byron Dean  
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Mr. & Mrs. Lamar Gordon  
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Mr. & Mrs. Robert L. Jones  
Larry Tate  
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Charlene Taylor  
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Powell  
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Elmie Thibodeaux  
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Herbert Devon Thomas  
Mrs. Mary D. Hartford  
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Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins  
Bob Thomasson  
Mr. & Mrs. Glen L. Flurry  
Janell Thornton  
Siloam BC  
Mrs. Doris Traylor  
Ruth & Cheer SSC, Juniper  
Grove BC  
Mr. Johnny Tuttle  
Mr. & Mrs. Greg Tynes  
Mr. & Mrs. Scott Sils  
Andrea Tynes  
Mr. & Mrs. Jackie Wooley  
Iven John Vogelsang  
Mrs. Annie Lee Churchwell  
Mr. John Walker  
Ruth & Cheer SSC, Juniper  
Grove BC  
Mrs. Beulah Wall  
Lucy Keene SSC, New Prospect  
BC  
Mrs. Vera Watson  
Mr. Michael L. Filgo  
Glenn White  
Mr. & Mrs. Dale Hays  
Mrs. Dee Youngblood  
Mrs. Joe Roberts  
Eli Zuriga  
Frank, John, Emily, Sam, Ford,  
Alice Ann, Ruthie, Margaret  
Henry, Dana, Sophia, Hamil-  
ton, Isaac, Walt, Lauren, Parke,  
& Will Jones

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Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins  
Mr. Bill Fryery  
Debbie, Colter and Hayden  
Pryery  
Maxine A. Hodges  
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Theresa Pinkard  
Katie Pinkard  
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Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins  
Doris Alford  
Mr. & Mrs. James E. Clark  
Mrs. Louise Allgood  
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Lucy Keene SSC, New Prospect  
BC  
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The David Tollison Family  
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Justin Aaron Carbello  
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Mrs. Wyona Cress  
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Crosthwait, Jr.  
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Mrs. LaCora Douglas  
Mr. & Mrs. Tom Douglas  
Kenneth Daine Doyle  
Mr. & Mrs. Frank O.  
Crosthwait, Jr.  
Miss Mary Frances Edwards  
Mrs. Hazle M. Daniels  
Kay L. Emerson  
Mr. & Mrs. Andy Oakes  
John Flowers



Hammers of Hope Mississippi replaced a roof on Brown Cottage at The Baptist Children's Village Reedy Acres Campus in Water Valley Easter weekend. Hammers of Hope is a non-profit Christian ministry that helps repair homes and build wheelchair ramps for those in need whether affected by natural disaster or life circumstances all while sharing the love of Christ. They do one project a month and each is schedule well in advanced and approved by their board of directors. They ask for donations to offset the materials costs for each project.



Mr. & Mrs. Roger A. Davis  
Ms. Margaret Forstner  
Mr. & Mrs. Herman L. Dungan  
Mr. Harry Garner  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Green  
Mrs. Johnnie Rose Gentry  
Mr. & Mrs. Reece Douglas, Jr.  
Mr. Victor E. Gilbert  
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins  
Jimmy Giles  
Mr. & Mrs. Jim Brents  
Gwinn H. Gordon  
Mr. & Mrs. James E. Clark  
Mr. & Mrs. Tony Grimes  
Mr. Norman Gough  
Rev. & Mrs. Wayne Edwards  
Rev. Curtis L. Guess  
Mrs. Tena Guess Stovall  
Geneva Fulce Guess  
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Mr. Lamont Jarrell  
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Ms. Kathryn Newell  
Bunko Butterflies  
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Mr. & Mrs. Andy Oakes



## Finding Strength • 2 Corinthians 12:7b-10; 13:2-8

Many Bible phrases show up in our everyday language; "a thorn in the flesh," included in today's Scripture passage, is one such. We use the phrase to describe everything from an obnoxious person we deal with regularly to a burdensome, ongoing situation or physical ailment that brings misery or frustration.

This concluding lesson begins with verses that have bolstered believers' faith over the centuries. In the preceding verses of chapter 12, Paul relates a story about "a man in Christ" who had some unimaginably incredible "visions and revelations from the Lord." He was "caught up to the third heaven" and heard "inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell" (vss. 1-4 NIV). Most believe Paul was referring to himself here; some Bible translations actually use the first-person pronoun in these verses.

So, Paul continues, to keep him from becoming puffed-up about this experience, "there was given me a thorn in my flesh" (vs. 7). Theologian Lawrence O. Richards says the Greek phrase for "was given" is "a word used to denote special favors given by the Lord to his saints (Ga. 3:21; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 4:14)." Yes, while the apostle had been given an extraordinary heavenly experience, it was accompanied by a less-desirable "gift" to keep him humble.

No one knows what this "thorn" was,

but it must have been severe; Paul described it as a "torment." Three times, he "pleaded with the Lord to take it away." The Lord, although declining, undergirded His servant with these words: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (vs. 9). This response from his Lord totally changed Paul's outlook. He committed to "boast" about and "take delight" in weaknesses and hardships he encountered, being as-

sure that in them, he would be adorned with Christ's power. He'd experience the glorious Christian oxymoron: "when I am weak, then I am strong" (vss. 9-10). Christians today have this same opportunity. Through studying God's word, learning His promises to His children, and embracing them by faith, our perspective can be gloriously altered, just as Paul's was!

The second section of this week's focal passage switches gears. If you read several of the preceding chapters of this epistle, you'll see many references of Paul admonishing his Corinthian readers for listening to false teachers.

These had infiltrated the church and sought to undermine Paul's apostleship, and the authority it accorded him to provide oversight and watch-care of the congregation he had helped birth. In chapter 12:11-18, Paul reminds the Corinthians that the authority of his apostleship was confirmed again and again. His wounded heart ached as he reminded them how lovingly and freely he had labored among them, and he longed for them to respond in like manner, for the gospel's sake.

Paul had a tender heart, but he could be firm when necessary. Preparing the congregation for what to expect when he arrived, in 2 Corinthians 13:2, he declared he would "not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others" (We also see his similar boldness in Galatians 2:11-21, where he calls Peter on the carpet in Antioch for "not acting in line with the truth of the gospel.")

Yes, the Paul who first came to them "in weakness with great fear and trembling" (1 Cor. 2:3) would present a different demeanor this trip; if necessary, he would engage in some

church discipline! From a fleshly standpoint, he may have been weak, but firmly assured the Corinthians he was strong in God's power (vs. 4).

In verse 5, Paul calls on these members to "examine" and "test" themselves spiritually. He wanted them to know that Christ Jesus was in them. Perhaps some would "fail the test," he cautioned.

He then softens his tone somewhat, praying for their repentance. Paul desired the truth to win out (vss. 7-8), so that he "would not have to be harsh in [the] use of authority" given by the Lord for their benefit (vs. 10). This gentler manner continues, concluding his letter with words of love and affirmation.

In a well-rounded exercise regimen, resistance (strength) training is vital. When one's muscles are sufficiently taxed, the fibers are broken down a bit. Quickly-repaired by the body, they regenerate, stronger than before. While painful and challenging, spiritual discipline, like strength training, is nevertheless essential. Hebrews 12:4-11 explains the benefits of this taxing experience: "God disciplines us for our good...[producing] a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

Maniscalco is a member of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Ocean Springs.



Explore the Bible  
with Ann Maniscalco

## Keep Standing • Esther 8:1-8, 9:20-22

Speaking from experience here: if you've ever reached a weight loss goal and improved your health, you know that success can be short-lived if the habits that got you to that goal aren't maintained. You face a new normal ... you simply can't go back. One victory doesn't mean you can sit back and coast. Injustice will continue to rise up as long as we live in a fallen world. We can celebrate what God has done even as we continue to work for what is right.

**Esther 8:1-2 - Honor comes to those who live with an upright character.**

Apparently Haman was considered a criminal, because the king had revered his property. Irony - again the tables were turned against Haman, even after his death. In even more irony, King Ahasuerus didn't keep the property for himself but gave it to Esther, of all people. Then Esther, in turn, puts Mordecai in charge of Haman's estate.

Significantly, the king gave Mordecai Haman's signet ring. Now Mordecai was designated prime minister instead of Haman! Now, there was a Jewish queen and a Jewish prime minister in the palace. The Jews had gone from being on the cusp of extinction to potentially being in the best

possible position to be secure.

There is a progression here. If you refer back to the earlier chapters of Esther, you'll note that Mordecai and Esther were both pretty sneaky and conniving. Now, they have both acknowledged their nationality as Jews and have risen to places of high honor. Both Esther and Mordecai have shown themselves to be of high character, and God has shown them honor and favor. God was in control of them - and us.

**Esther 8:3-8 - Don't rest until victory is complete.**

There is still a problem in the palace, however. There was an edict in place to exterminate the Jews, and it hadn't change. Until that edict had been dealt with, the victory was incomplete.

So Esther went to the king again, without an invitation. She begged him to put an end to the evil plan in place because of Haman. Esther had a heartfelt concern for her people, and couldn't rest until the matter was settled.

Once more, King Ahasuerus extended the gold scepter. In so doing, he showed her favor. Esther's request was simple: she needed a second decree written that overturned the first decree. Esther simply interceded before the king. This act is what saved the Israelites from extermination. She didn't ask anything for herself.

The king couldn't actually revoke the original edict, but the new decree he issued would favor the Jews. Since Mordecai

was now prime minister, it was his job to write the new decree, and the king gave him a virtual blank check.

Both Esther and Mordecai pressed on toward their task of keeping the Jews safe. There is much to be said for persistence.

**Esther 9:20-22 - Rejoice in what God does.**

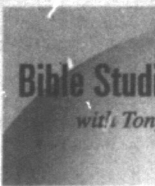
Mordecai instituted what would be known as the Feast of Purim. This particular feast wasn't part of the original Mosaic law. Instead, it was commanded

by Mordecai and Esther. This two-day feast was instituted as a remembrance of the goodness of God working through a host of circumstances to protect the Jews from annihilation.

These two verses detail what the feast was to look like - feasting, rejoicing, and sending gifts to one another and to the poor. According to Warren Wiersbe's "Be" series on the Old Testament, "the Jews begin their celebration with a fast on the thirteenth day of the month, commemorating the date on which Haman's evil decree was issued. They go to the synagogue and hear the book of Esther publicly read; and whenever the name of Haman is mentioned, they cry out, 'May he be accursed!' or 'Ma his name perish!' Children bring a special Purim rattle called a 'gragar' and use it to make noise every time they hear Haman's name read."

The rejoicing which began centuries ago continues today. While Purim isn't a Christian observance, we can celebrate along with them. Purim is a tradition the Jews hold, and it's a tradition based on a miraculous deliverance. For us as Christians, we need to be mindful of all God has done for us, and rejoice in like manner. He has been so good to us!

Martin is Associate Editor of The Baptist Record.



Bible Studies for Life  
with Tony Martin



## Just for the Record



**SHILOH CHURCH, VAIDEN,** recognized its mothers on Mother's Day.



**FIRST CHURCH, MYRICK,** honored its mothers on Mother's Day.



The WMU of **GRACE CHURCH, VICKSBURG,** had an outing to Barry's Fish House.



**CENTERPOINT CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN,** took a group to Worship Night in America Tour presented by Chris Tomlin Apr. 28 in Jackson.



**CALVARY CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO,** celebrated the retirement of indebtedness on a new fellowship hall with the burning of the note Mar. 4.



**VICTORY CHURCH, JEFF DAVIS COUNTY,** recognized Gaylan Warren upon her graduation from Prentiss Christian High School. She is shown with pastor Nathan Barber.



**CENTER HILL CHURCH, MONROE ASSOCIATION,** held a parent-child dedication Mother's Day. Shown are Dallas, Kellyn, and Silas Flippo. Terry Edwards, pastor.



**FAIR RIVER CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN,** held an Easter egg hunt and pastor Jay Anderson shared the Easter story.



Members of **SPRING HILL CHURCH, WATERFORD,** celebrated old-fashioned day, including singing old songs, a potluck lunch, and fellowship. John Parker, pastor.